

Serial No. 09/975,101
Amendment dated June 10, 2004
Reply to Office action of March 31, 2004

Remarks

This is a reply to a final rejection dated March 31, 2004. Claims 1-7, 9-12, 16-17, and 24-25 are pending in the case after entry of this amendment. Claims 8, 13-15, and 18-23 are canceled. Claims 2 and 3 are original. Claims 1, 4-7, 9-12, 14, and 16-17 are presently amended, and claims 24-25 are new. As this amendment should place the application in a condition for allowance, prompt entry of the amendment and action on the merits is earnestly requested.

Claims 4-7, 9-12, and 16-17

In the office action, the Examiner objected to claims 4-6 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but stated that claims 4-6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 4 and 6 were dependent upon claim 1, and claim 5 was dependent upon claim 4. By this amendment, the applicant has thus rewritten claim 4 in independent form, and has incorporated claim 6 into claim 1.

Additionally, the dependency of each of claims 6-7, 9-12, and 16-17 has been amended to be dependent upon allowable claim 4, and these claims and claim 5 have been amended to comply with antecedent basis requirements. As such, the applicant asserts that claims 4-7, 9-12, and 16-17 are now in a condition for allowance, since all now ultimately depend from allowable independent claim 4.

Claims 1-3, and 24-25

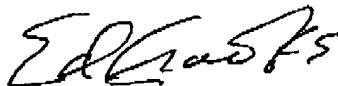
As stated earlier, the Examiner has stated that claim 6 would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Since claim 6 was directly dependent upon claim 1, the applicant has incorporated claim 6 into claim 1, which should now be in a condition for allowance. Additionally, claims 2-3, and 24-25 are dependent upon allowable independent claim 1. Claim 24 is analogous to claim 11 and claim 25 is analogous to claim 5, save the different dependencies. As such, the applicant asserts that claims 1-3 and 24-25 are also in a condition for allowance.

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In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-7, 9-12, 16-17, and 24-25 are in a condition for allowance. Allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

As a courtesy to the Examiner, a clean copy of the claims as now pending is included as an appendix.

Respectfully submitted,
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